

Timeline Followback (TLFB) Alcohol Use 30-Day Calendar Instructions

To help us evaluate your drinking, we need to get an idea of what your alcohol use was like in the past 30 days. To do this, we would like you to fill out the attached calendar.

- ✓ Filling out the calendar is not hard!
- ✓ Try to be as accurate as possible.
- ✓ We recognize you won't have perfect recall. That's OKAY.

WHAT TO FILL IN

- The idea is to put a number in for **each day** on the calendar.
- On days when you did not drink, you should write a "0".
- On days when you did drink, you should write in the total number of drinks you had.
- We want you to record your drinking on the calendar using Standard Drinks. *For example*, if you had 6 beers, write the number 6 for that day. If you drank two or more different kinds of alcoholic beverage in a day such as 2 beers and 3 glasses of wine, you would write the number 5 for that day.

It's important that something is written for every day, even if it is a "0".

YOUR BEST ESTIMATE

- We realize it isn't easy to recall things with 100% accuracy.
- If you are not sure whether you drank 7 or 11 drinks or whether you drank on a Thursday or a Friday, **give it your best guess!** What is important is that 7 or 11 drinks is very different from 1 or 2 drinks or 25 drinks. The goal is to get a sense of how frequently you drank, how much you drank, and your patterns of drinking.

HELPFUL HINTS

- If you have an appointment book you can use it to help you recall your drinking.
- Holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas are marked on the calendar to help you better recall your drinking. Also, think about how much you drank on personal holidays & events such as birthdays, vacations, or parties.
- If you have regular drinking patterns you can use these to help you recall your drinking. For example, you may have a daily or weekend/weekday pattern, or drink more in the summer or on trips, or you may drink on Wednesdays after playing sports.

COMPLETING THE CALENDAR

- A blank calendar is attached. Write in the number of Standard Drinks that you had each day
- The time period we are talking about on the calendar is
from _____ to _____
- In estimating your drinking, be as accurate as possible.
- **DOUBLE CHECK THAT ALL DAYS ARE FILLED IN BEFORE RETURNING THE CALENDAR.**
- Before you start look at the **SAMPLE CALENDAR AND STANDARD DRINK CHART** on the next page.

Instructions for Filling Out the Timeline Followback (TLFB) Alcohol Use Calendar

✓ SAMPLE CALENDAR

2008	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
						1 8	2 0
S	3 7	4 0	5 3	6 8	7 1	8 0	9 11
E	10 2	11 2	12 0	13 3	14 5	15 14	16 4
P	17 2	18 0	19 0	20 0	21 0	22 2	23 13
T	24 0	25 0	26 6	27 0	28 0	29 0	30 2

U. S. STANDARD DRINK CONVERSION CHART

One Standard Drink Is Equal To

◆ 12 oz of BEER (5%)

◆ 5 oz of WINE (10% – 12%)

◆ 3 oz of FORTIFIED WINE (16% – 18%)

◆ 1.2 oz of HARD LIQUOR (86 proof – 100 proof; 43% – 50%)

◆ WINE: 1 Bottle

25 oz/750 ml	=	5 standard drinks
40 oz/1.5 liter	=	8 standard drinks
25 oz fortified	=	8 1/3 standard drinks

◆ HARD LIQUOR: 1 Bottle

12 oz (mickey)	=	8 standard drinks
26 oz	=	17 1/3 standard drinks
40 oz	=	26 2/3 standard drinks

TLFB Memory Aids and Tricks of the Trade

The Alcohol **Timeline Followback (TLFB) method** includes a calendar to help people provide retrospective estimates of their daily alcohol, cigarette, and drug use. Several memory aids were developed to help people recall their alcohol, cigarette, and drug use when completing the TLFB.

DAILY CALENDAR: The daily calendar provides a temporal framework for recalling events and patterns related to a person's use of alcohol. Some people have found it useful to consult their personal appointment or date books as aids in completing the calendar. Use of aids is encouraged. Calendar aids have also been used to help people recall relapse episodes.

KEY DATES: Use of holidays, birthdays, newsworthy events and other personal events that are meaningful to people can assist recall of alcohol. In this regard, the TLFB calendar and computerized program displays standard holidays on the calendar and, as part of the instructions, asks people to identify their own personal holidays and significant events. These latter events may be generic (e.g., major sporting event, major news events) or idiosyncratic (e.g., person's own or others' birthdays, dates of important personal events such as changing jobs, buying a house).

BLACK AND WHITE DAYS: People are asked to recall lengthy periods of time when they completely abstained or used alcohol in a very patterned manner (e.g., 5 drinks every day; one to two drinks every Wednesday; eight beers routinely on Fridays and Saturdays), or drank heavily regularly for an extended period of time.

DISCRETE EVENTS AND ANCHOR POINTS: Like holidays, use of specific events such as arrests, hospitalizations, illnesses, employment, and treatment participation can be used to help people identify periods of extended alcohol use or abstinence. Anchor points can be used to identify use that occurs during, before and after events (e.g., job loss, marital breakup) or notable drinking episodes (e.g., started using after the death of a close relative). We have found that people remember what they were doing around these anchor dates and can reconstruct their use for substantial periods based on these dates.

ALCOHOL USE BOUNDARIES: A boundary procedure establishes upper and lower amounts of use for the time period under consideration. When starting the interview, the interviewer can ask about the greatest and the least amounts consumed on any day in the reporting period. Reporting the greatest amount gives the person permission to admit to high levels of use.

EXAGGERATION TECHNIQUE: To avoid vague or nondescript alcohol use descriptions (e.g., "I drank a lot", "I didn't drink very much") people can be presented with an exaggerated minimum or maximum value to help define the amount. This technique is designed to target approximate levels of consumption in difficult cases. For example, if a person reports having drunk "a lot" of beers on a day, but claims an inability to specify what "a lot" means, the interviewer can ask the person "Does 'a lot' mean two beers or 30 beers?" A typical response to this question might take the form of "certainly not 30 beers, more like 12 to 14 beers."

STANDARD DRINK CONVERSION: Alcoholic beverages vary in their alcohol concentration and drink size. Also, many drinkers report combined beverages use (e.g., two beers and one glass of wine). Thus, it is important when collecting drinking data to agree on what constitutes a "drink." This problem is dealt with by asking people to report their drinking using a standard drink conversion. Cards showing standard drink equivalents can be used.